

EFFECTS OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF TOPICS AND THE INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of prior knowledge of topics with their instructional objectives on senior secondary school class two (SS II) students. The study was carried out in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The design of the study is quasi experimental of pretest-posttest of non-equivalent control group. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study was 6053 Senior Secondary School class 2 (SS II) Students in thirty nine Co-educational Secondary Schools in Abakaliki Education Zone. Simple random Sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 120 SS II Students that offer literature-in-English in four Co-educational Secondary Schools in the Zone. Two of the schools formed the treatment group, while two formed the control group. Instrument for data collection was a researcher made literature-in-English Achievement Test (LAT). Data were collected from pretest and posttest. The data collected were analyzed using statistical mean, standard deviation, and Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The result of the study revealed that the treatment group taught Literature-in-English with prior knowledge topics and instructional objectives performed better than the control group taught Literature-in-English without prior knowledge of topics to be taught with their instructional objectives. The result also revealed that the performance of the students according to gender indicated that males performed better than females amongst the treatment group. However the mean achievement difference between the males and the females was not statistically significant. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that Literature-in-English teachers should give their students topics to be learnt and this instructional objectives prior to instruction and secondly, that authors of texts in Literature-in-English should state the instructional objectives of each chapter or topic in their books.

Introduction

Teaching is an art that has facilitation of learning as it's primary purpose. According to Uche and Onyemerekeya (1998), teaching is a process that requires intuition, creativity, improvisation, and expressiveness. Earlier and current educationists view teaching as any activity engaged in by one person in order to facilitate learning on the part of another (Eya and Igbokwe 1999, Aguokogbuo 2000, Biggs and Tang, 2011 and Meziobi and Meziobi, 2014).

Akudolu (1994:135-136). Proffers four criteria for effective teaching as follows:

- a. Teaching is systematic
- b. Teaching involves somebody making it possible for somebody else to learn something.
- c. Teaching is objective based, and
- d. Teaching involves assessment of the students to ascertain the extent the objectives of teaching have been achieved.

One vital issue that stands out clearly in the above four criteria for effective teaching is that teaching is undertaken to achieve certain objectives. It involves planning and the aim of such planning is to ensure that teaching elicits and sustains students' attention, motivation, and effort to learn; and that learning activity brings the intended learning otherwise known as instructional objectives. According to Kyriaco (1991), when instructional objectives are achieved, then "effective learning" has occurred. Success in teaching is therefore measured by the degree to which the teacher is able to achieve his or her instructional objectives.

One major area of concern among literature-in-English teachers in Nigeria is the incessant poor performance of secondary school students in Literature-in-English in both internal and external examinations. Poor performance in Literature-in-English in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSCE), over a number of years; from year 2000 to date in Nigeria, is a clear indication of the failure of the teachers to achieve their instructional objectives to a great extent. The poor performance of Nigerian secondary school students in Literature-in-English has been attributed to conventional approach used in teaching of the subject. This approach involves mainly the reading of recommended texts and memorization of certain facts from the texts. Hence Aluko (1990), and Maduabuchi (2006) call for more proactive teaching methods and strategies in the teaching of Literature-in-English in order to correct the anomaly.

The high rate of failure among secondary school students in Nigeria in external examination has become a source of concern to educationists in the country. They therefore call for better teaching and learning strategies in the teaching of the subject.

There is a general opinion among educationists that exposing learners to instructional objectives prior to teaching has the potential of bringing about effective learning. Tobias (1994), and Alexander, Murphy, Buehl, and Sperl (1998) are of the view that prior knowledge of instructional objectives can aid learning. They all agree that prior knowledge of instructional objectives helps students to organize their learning activities and study more effectively in order to achieve the set objectives. This study is therefore carried out to ascertain the effectiveness of prior knowledge of instructional objectives as a teaching and learning strategy amongst Literature-in-English students in Nigeria. The gender aspect of the study will add to the existing knowledge on the controversy over which of the sexes perform better in science or arts, (Eze 2007).

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of prior knowledge of topics and their instructional objectives on students mean achievement scores in Literature-in-English as compared with those taught with conventional method.
2. What are the effects of prior knowledge of topics and their instructional objectives on the mean achievement scores of male and female students in Literature-in-English?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students exposed to topics and their instructional objectives prior to instruction in Literature-in-English and those taught with conventional method.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students taught Literature-in-English with prior knowledge of topics and their instructional objectives and those taught with conventional method.

Method

Design: The study used a quasi experimental design specifically. It is a pretest, posttest non-equivalent control group design.

Population of the study: The population of the study is made up of 6053 students in senior secondary class 2 (SS II students) in thirty-nine co-educational secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Sample: Simple random sampling technique was used to draw one hundred and twenty (120) SSII students that offer Literature-in-English in four Co-educational secondary schools. Two of the schools formed the treatment group (TG) while two formed the control group (CG). Two intact classes were used for the study in each of the schools.

Instrument: The instrument used for the study was a researcher-designed objective test titled Literature-in-English achievement test (LAT). The instrument contains four options A-D, out of which one is correct and the other 3 are distractors. It consists thirty-five items. Section A was made up of fourteen (14) items on African prose; section B consists thirteen (13) items on African drama and section C was made up of eight (8) items on African poetry. The instrument was validated by specialists in Literature-in-English, Language Education, and Measurement and Evaluation all in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria. The instrument was further subjected to reliability test and was administered to thirty SS II students offering Literature-in-English in a secondary school outside the area of the study. A reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained using Richardson formula (KR.20).

Method of Data Analysis

Research questions were answered using mean scores and standard deviation; while the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance using the Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

Experimental Procedure

At the onset of the experiment, the researcher familiarized herself with the experimental groups and with the help of Literature-in-English teachers in the schools, administered Pre-test to the subjects. In the course of the experiment, the treatment group was issued instructional objectives on each topic that was taught a day prior to the lesson on which the objectives were based. The treatment group was instructed to study the topics ahead of the teacher and work hard to attain the instructional objectives. The control group was not issued any topics and instructional objectives prior to instruction. The experiment lasted for six weeks at the end of which a post-test was administered; after the items in the instrument were reshuffled and typed on a different colour of paper.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Students Taught Literature-in-English with Prior Knowledge of Topics and Instructional Objectives, and those Taught with Conventional Method.

Group	Variables	\bar{x}	SD	N
Treatment Group	Instructional Objectives	70.12	16.26	60
Control Group	Conventional Method	48.03	13.23	60

Table 1 above shows that the students taught Literature-in-English with prior knowledge of topics and instructional objectives (treatment group) scored higher than those taught with conventional method (control group). Specifically, the table shows that the students exposed to instructional objectives had mean achievement score of 70.12 and standard deviation of 16.26; while those taught with conventional method had mean achievement score of 48.03 and standard deviation of 13.23.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of students According to Gender

Group	Variables	According to Gender					
		\bar{x}	Male SD	N	\bar{x}	Female SD	N
Treatment Group	Instructional Objectives	71.02	15.99	39	68.75	16.90	24
Control Group	Conventional Method	47.21	8.23	32	48.96	8.97	28

Table 2 above reveals that in the treatment group, males had mean achievement score of 71.02, with standard deviation 15.99, while the females had mean achievement score of 68.96 with standard deviation of 16.90. Amongst the control group, males had mean achievement score of 47.21 with standard deviation of 8.23, while the females had mean achievement score of 48.96 with standard deviation of 8.97.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANCOVA) of Posttest Scores based on Teaching Strategy

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F-cal	F-tab	Decision
Covariates	3239.621	1	3239.621	19.130		
Pretest2	3239.621	1	3239.621	19.130		
Main Effects	11550.598	1	11550.598	68.206		
Methods	11550.598	1	11550.598	68.206	6.85	S
Explained	14790.220	2	7395.110	43.668		
Residual	19813.772	117	169.348			
Total	34603.992	119	290.790			

Significant at P < 0.05

Table 3 indicates that f-cal value of 68.206 is greater than the table value of 6.85 at .05 level of significance. Since the f-cal is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there was significant difference between the mean achievement scores of the treatment group and control group in favour of the treatment group.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance based on Gender

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F-cal	F-tab	Decision
Covariates	3239.621	1	3239.621	12.194		
Pretest2	3239.621	1	3239.621	12.194		
Main Effects	281.362	1	281.362	1.059		
Gender	281.362	1	281.362	1.059	3.85	NS
Explained	3520.983	2	1760.492	6.627		
Residual	31083.008	117	265.667			
Total	34603.992	119	290.790			

Not Significant at P < 0.05

Table 4 above shows that the f-cal value, 1.059 is less than the table value of 3.85 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught literature-in-English with prior knowledge of topics and instructional objectives and those taught with conventional method is accepted since the f-cal is less than the table value.

Discussion

The result of the study showed that there is significant difference between the mean scores of students taught Literature-in-English with prior knowledge of topics and instructional objectives and those taught with conventional method in favour of the treatment group. This finding agrees with Tobias (1994) and Alexander,

Murphy, Buehl, and Sperl (1998) who observed that exposing students to instructional objectives prior to instruction can enhance learning. The result may be attributed to students' determination to achieve the set instructional objective. This finding also lends support to the fact that goal setting is a pre-requisite to achieving success in one's endeavours. The study therefore lends credence to Mkpa (1989) who suggested that in the absence of the teacher, the students could carry on with their studies if they are aware of the instructional objectives of the unit or topics they are expected to cover, stressing that this could yield a better result than when no instructional objectives are used to guide private studies.

The result of the study also showed that boys performed better than girls in the treatment group. This study agrees with Teo and Teh (1987) who found in a similar study, that boys provided with instructional objectives achieved better than girls who equally received instructional objectives. However, contrary to Teo and Teh's finding, the test of significant difference in this study (table 4) showed that the difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female students in the treatment group is not significant. The no significant difference observed in this study indicates that all things being equal, boys and girls are expected to perform at the same level. It could therefore be deduced from this study that gender does not influence performance either in science or in arts.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that the use of prior knowledge of instructional objectives amongst students enhanced their achievement in Literature-in-English. In this regard, Literature teachers can adopt this teaching-learning strategy to achieve the same purpose.

Recommendations

- Based on the findings of the this study, the following recommendations are proffered:
1. Literature-in-English teachers should give their students topics to be learnt and the instructional objectives a day or two prior to instruction.
 2. Authors of Literature-in-English texts should state the instructional objectives of each chapter or topic to aid self study among students.

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